

Soldiers Armywide learn valuable skills

Marksmanship competition provides training

By Paula J. Randall Pagán

U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit, Accessions Support Brigade

FORT BENNING, Ga. - "Being able to shoot, being a marksman is what being a Soldier is all about."

That's what Lt. Gen. Anthony R. Jones, deputy commanding general and chief of staff of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command, told the nearly 200 Soldiers gathered at the 2005 U.S. Army Small Arms Championships.

Jones was the guest speaker at the All-Army Championships Awards Ceremony conducted March 20 at Phillips Range. Active duty, National Guard and Reserve Soldiers from across the country took part in the All-Army Pistol and Rifle Championships March 12 to 24. The U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit hosted the All-Army Small Arms Championships in conjunction with the U.S. Army Infantry Center.

"I know that now you're more confident marksmen and better Soldiers and I ask that you take this training back to your units and share it with your fellow Soldiers; it's tremendously important," Jones told the competitors. "Go back and tell your leaders about the good training that the Army Marksmanship Unit and Fort Benning provide; I think there's none better."

Braving pouring rain and wind chills in the 30s, Soldiers competed with the M-16 rifle or M-4 carbine, M-9 pistol and M-24 or M-14 rifles against 188 counterparts from the regular Army, Reserve and National Guard. Rifle matches were shot at ranges from 200 to 500 yards.

Pistol matches were fired under combat time standards at seven to 25 yards; one team match included a timed two-mile run with weapons and full combat gear. All firing was done with helmet and individual combat gear. Long-range matches were fired at ranges of 600 to 1,000 yards.

"The advanced shooting experience gained in these challenging matches translates into better trained and confident Soldiers, ready to meet the challenges of the global war on terrorism," said USAMU Commander Lt. Col. David J. Liwanag. "These championships are the pinnacle of in-service Army competitive marksmanship training."

Not only did the Soldiers learn from competing in the matches, but all competitors in the All-Army Championships also attend mandatory rifle, pistol and long range training classes given by USAMU instructors and received Certificates of Training.

According to Liwanag, after last year's All-Army Competition, competitors from Fort Benning's CONUS Replacement Center used the training they received and applied it to their own unit training, which resulted in a weapons qualification increase from 30 percent to 90 percent.

"The All-Army Competition gives all competitors the opportunity to spend a week on the ranges fine-tuning the fundamental skills necessary for successful shooting," said USAMU's Spc. Sean P. Watson, who won the U.S. Army Small Arms Overall Individual Championship and the Service Pistol Individual Championship. "The added pressure of competition is important as it keeps the shooters' motivation and mindset focused every day. These matches are unique in that all soldiers competing are using their assigned or similar weapons. Many are very surprised to find how successful they can be engaging targets at extended ranges."

"The All Army Rifle Championships was a tremendous event and a great experience for future leaders of our Army," said Staff Sgt. Jared N. van Aalst of the 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, who won the Service Rifle Individual Championship. "All of the rifle firing was conducted on a known distance range and emphasized individual marksmanship skills and not target engagement. Most soldiers lack the training and confidence necessary to reliably hit a man-sized target past 200 meters, much less 500 yards.

"Soldiers will also take back to their respective units the importance of known distance firing because of the downrange feedback that they received while firing," van Aalst continued. "I also believe the All-Army Championships better prepares service members for combat, the only way to duplicate the marksmanship stress felt during combat is at the highest levels of individual shooting competition."

Matches were open to all Soldiers worldwide of any military occupational specialty. Participants included active duty Soldiers from Fort Benning, Fort Gillem, Ga., Fort Bragg, N.C., Fort Campbell, Ky., Fort Sill, Okla., Fort Lewis, Wash., Fort Riley, Kan., and Fort Drum, N.Y. National Guardsmen came from New York, Pennsylvania, Nebraska, Wyoming and Texas and numerous Army Reservists also participated. Approximately 40 percent of the Soldiers who competed were combat veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Other guests at the March 20 ceremony included, Fort Benning Commanding General Brig. Gen. Benjamin Freakley, Fort Benning Garrison Commander Col. Ricardo Riera, Accessions Support Brigade Commander Col. Freddie N. Blakely, TRADOC Command Sgt. Maj. John D. Sparks, Fort Benning Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Kelso, Accessions Support Brigade Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas J. LiPuma and retired Command Sgt. Maj. Jimmie W. Spencer, who represented the Association of the U.S. Army; the Infantry Center Band also performed.

(Formed in 1956 by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to raise the standards of marksmanship throughout the U.S. Army, the Army Marksmanship Unit is assigned to the Accessions Support Brigade of Fort Knox, Ky., which is under U.S. Army Accessions Command, of Fort Monroe, Va. Accessions Command is charged with overseeing recruiting and training of the Army's enlisted Soldiers and officers. The Marksmanship Unit trains its Soldiers to win competitions and enhances combat readiness through train-the-trainer clinics, research and development. The world-class Soldier-athletes of the USAMU also promote the Army and assist recruiters in attracting young Americans to enlist in the Army. For more information on the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit, contact the Public Affairs Office at (706) 545-5436, paula.pagan@usaac.army.mil or <http://www.usarec.army.mil/hq/amu/>.)

-30-

USAMU Soldier wins Army Small Arms Championship

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FORT BENNING, Ga. - A Soldier of the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit triumphed over 123 competitors to take the overall prize in the All-Army Small Arms Championship March 20.

Spc. Sean P. Watson, a USAMU Service Pistol Team member, won the U.S. Army Small Arms Overall Individual Championship, which was an aggregate of the U.S. Army Service Rifle Individual Championship and the U.S. Army Service Pistol Individual Championship. Spc. Craig S. Nelson, a USAMU gunsmith, took second place and Sgt. Robert S. Park II, a USAMU service pistol shooter, came in third.

Staff Sgt. John M. Buol was the winner in the Novice Division, followed by Staff Sgt. Russell V. Gerhardt in second place; both Soldiers are Reservists in the Small Arms Readiness Group. Sgt. 1st Class Kevin W. Bittenbender of the Pennsylvania National Guard took third place.

The Army Service Rifle Championship was an aggregate of four matches that were fired March 14 to 17 - the Secretary of the Army Rifle Match, Chief of Staff of the Army Rifle Match, Commanding General U.S Infantry Trophy Match and the All-Army Excellence in Competition Rifle Match. The Army Service Pistol Championship was an aggregate of three matches that were fired March 18 and 19 - the Secretary of the Army Pistol Match, Chief of Staff of the Army Pistol Match and the All-Army Excellence in Competition Pistol Match.

The Secretary of the Army Match was an aggregate of the Secretary of the Army Rifle Match and the Secretary of the Army Pistol Match. The winners were Watson, Park and Nelson in first through third. Buol won the Novice Division; in second place was Sgt. Christopher D. McGuire of the Wyoming National Guard and in third was 2nd Lt. Jason E. Keohler of Fort Bragg, N.C.

The Chief of Staff of the Army Match was an aggregate of the Chief of Staff of the Army Rifle Match and the Chief of Staff of the Army Pistol Match. The winner was Nelson, followed by Park then Watson. Buol took the Novice Division, with Gerhardt in second place and Sgt. Richard F. Hartley of the Army Reserve 321st Engineer Battalion in third.

Watson won the Army Service Pistol Championship, followed by 1st Sgt. Joel P. Kaczorowski of Fort Bragg in second place, Park in third place and Nelson in fourth. The Novice Division winner was Capt. James R. Barrows of Fort Sill, Okla.; Buol took second place and Sgt. 1st Class Andrew C. Fegley of the New York National Guard finished third.

Watson also won the Excellence in Competition Pistol Match, followed by Kaczorowski in second place and Nelson in third. Master Sgt. Roger A. Thompson of Fort Lewis, Wash., was the Novice Division winner, with Fegley in second place and Barrows in third.

A Sniper Platoon Soldier of the 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, blew away the competition to take the U.S. Army Service Rifle Individual Championship. Staff Sgt. Jared N. van Aalst beat 147 Soldiers to win the Service Rifle Championship by 28 points more than the second place finisher. Army National Guardsman 1st Lt. Rodney W. Richmond, the assistant state marksmanship coordinator for the New York

National Guard, took second place and Maj. Rhonda L. Bright of the Army Reserve Small Arms Readiness Group finished third. Sgt. Joel S. Micholick of the 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, was the winner in the Novice Category followed by Hartley and Spc. Henry L. Gray of the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit.

Kaczorowski was the winner in the Secretary of the Army Pistol Match, in which Watson was second and Park was third. Fegley took the Novice Division with Barrows in second place and Buol in third.

Army Reservist Staff Sgt. Keith N. Sanderson of the Small Arms Readiness Group won the Chief of Staff of the Army Pistol Match; Park was second and Nelson was third. Buol was the Novice Division winner; Lt. Col. Edward J. Stawowczyk of TSM-Close Combat Missile System took second place and Barrows was third.

Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey D. Stehling of the Texas National Guard won the Infantry Trophy Rifle Match, Maj. Ross N. Finley of the Nebraska National Guard was second and van Aalst was third. In the Novice Category, Gerhardt was the winner, Sgt. Morgan E. Jenkins of the Wyoming National Guard took second place and Thompson finished third.

Sgt. 1st Class Mark A. Benson of the Pennsylvania National Guard won the Excellence in Competition Rifle Match, followed by van Aalst in second place and Sgt. Thomas J. Scott of the New York National Guard in third.

The Small Arms Readiness Group Army Reserve Team of Buol, Gerhardt, Staff Sgt. Leslie D. Lewis and Sgt. John F. Arcularius Jr. won the Army Rifle Team Championship, which was an aggregate of the Infantry Trophy Team and the Sergeant Major of the Army Team matches. The team from the 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, of van Aalst, Micholick, Staff Sgt. Robby D. Johnson and Spc. Michael G. Kase took second place. The New York National Guard Team of Scott, Richmond, Sgt. 1st Class Randy Knowlton and Sgt. 1st Class David Evans finished third.

The New York National Guard Team won the Commanding General Infantry Trophy Rifle Team Match; team members were Scott, Richmond, Knowlton and Evans. Chief Warrant Officer 4 Greg S. Coker, Staff Sgt. Lowell B. Bindschatel, Sgt. David M. Tatone and Sgt. Eric D. Radford from Fort Campbell, Ky., took second place; the Small Arms Readiness Group Army Reserve Team finished third.

The 75th Ranger Team won the Sergeant Major of the Army Rifle Team Match; van Aalst also had the highest individual score in the match of 231 points out of a possible 250 out of the 120 competitors. In second place was the Small Arms Readiness Group Army Reservists Team. The Pennsylvania National Guard Team took third place; team members were Maj. Michael J. Levitsky, Capt. John A. Younger, Bittenbender and Benson.

Richmond, who won day one of the All-Army Small Arms Championship, also took the championship on day two. Richmond beat 147 other Soldiers to win the Chief of Staff of the Army Rifle Match; he also won the Secretary of the Army Rifle Match. In the Chief of Staff of the Army Rifle Match, Lewis took second place and van Aalst came in third; in the Novice Category, the winner was by Micholick, followed in second place by Hartley and Bittenbender in third.

Van Aalst also took second place, only one point behind Richmond, in Secretary of the Army Rifle Match, in which Bright finished third in the Open Category and was the highest female finisher. The Novice winner was Pfc. Lee L. Vampola of Company B, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment. Micholick took second place and Sgt. Christopher D. McGuire of the Wyoming National Guard came in third.

The USAMU Team of Watson, Nelson, Park and Cpl. Walter E. Craig Jr. won the General Patton Pistol Match, which included a timed two-mile run. The 75th Ranger Team took second place and the Army Reserve Team finished third.

The USAMU Team won the Sergeant Major of the Army Pistol Team Match; the Army Reserve Team finished second and the Pennsylvania National Guard team took third. The USAMU Team also won the Combat Assault Pistol Match, in which the New York National Guard took second place and the Fort Campbell Team finished third.